

Letter to Dr. Manlove from Mr. Robert M. Ajemian, written while Mr. Ajemian was vacationing in Acapulco, Mexico.

Friday, Jan. 28, 1954

Dear Sir,

I have become aware, the last few days, of an unsettling report concerning our recent TIME story on the esophagus transplant to little Mike Stansberry. Since I was the reporter who worked directly in the story, I would like to make a few comments.

In the first place, may I be very frank and say that Dr. Swan gave us little cooperation on the story. Item: The first day we called upon him we asked if he would allow us to take a few pictures of himself at Mike's bedside. He refused. We told him we would photograph him from behind and not show his face. He still refused and promptly notified me he did not want his name used in any story we might run. "I don't want this to be a story about Swan," he said, and I may say irritatingly, to me several times.

In all the hours I worked on this story, assembling information, translating medical terminology, fitting together details of the operation, I was able to negotiate only five minutes of direct interview with Dr. Swan, for my purposes, the most important man in the story. He simply would not give me any time. After the operation, about nine o'clock at night, I was having trouble with some of the facts in the story (I was then writing it up) and called Dr. Swan at home. He cautioned me several times about "making a big story out of nothing" and finally, after a spirited conversation in which I told him I didn't think he was trying to help me, he hung up the telephone.

Certainly this behaviour, however opposing from my standpoint, was not that of a person assisting a story along. So far as I am concerned it was outright resistance. I repeat, 99 per cent of the research I gathered on this story was gained from other doctors at the hospital.

Additionally, and this I believe you already know, I was advised by Dr. Swan that everything we did had to be cleared through the State Medical Association. I called Dr. William Condon who assured me, most enthusiastically, that it was perfectly all right to go ahead with this story.

May I say in conclusion that I feel Dr. Swan is a fine man, a fine doctor, and a gentlemen, but most emphatically, he is not a good source of news.

Please excuse the appearance of this letter; I am in the midst of vacation.

Respectfully,

/s/ Robert M. Ajemian